

South Street Seaport Museum,  
213-215 Water Street  
(A.A. Thompson and Company)  
New York City  
New York County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5684

HABS

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31-NE40,

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM  
213-215 WATER STREET  
(A. A. Thompson & Co.)

HABS No. NY-5684

Location: 213-215 Water Street,  
South Street Seaport Museum,  
New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: New York City.  
Lessee: South Street Seaport Museum.

Present Occupant: Vacant.

Present Use: Proposed Art Gallery.

Significance: This Italianate cast-iron and stone warehouse for tins and metals was designed by the renowned New York City architect Stephen D. Hatch in 1868 for A. A. Thompson & Co. The South Street Seaport Museum has plans to re-create the missing cast-iron ground floor facade and to transform the wooden column filled first floor into an art gallery. South Street Seaport Museum is a group of galleries, stores and piers standing in close proximity to high-rise office buildings in lower Manhattan.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1868.
2. Architect: Stephen Decatur Hatch (1839-1894), who designed 213-215 Water Street, was one of New York's well known architects in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For the most part, Hatch designed costly mercantile buildings; his most famous accomplishments are the Boreel Building on Broadway and the Murray Hill Hotel. Son of an inventor, Hatch was born in Vermont. For his first job, he was a construction inspector. Subsequently, he studied architecture with John B. Snook, a renowned New York architect. When Hatch began to practice architecture in 1865 he was named architect of the U.S. War Department and given the job of constructing all the military posts in New York. It is probable that 213-215 Water Street was one of Hatch's first civilian commissions.

3. **Original and subsequent owners:** The building was built on Block 96, lots 21 and 22. Today the property is included in lot 5. Information for the following chain of title comes from the records of the New York City Conveyance Office, Surrogate's Court.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
March 9, 1866 Liber 1960; p. 237	Frederick and Eleanora R. Conkling (formerly Ronalds).	Alexander and William Thompson
Feb. 15, 1869 Liber 1074; p. 571	Alexander & William Thompson	Maturin Livingston Party Wall Agreement (Lots 2, 22, 23, 24).
March 7, 1887 Liber 2025; p. 323	John W. Thompson William A. Thompson Ernest A. Thompson	Ellen Thompson (\$1 for 1/2 part of 213-215 Water Street).
March 7, 1887 Liber 2025; p. 329	William Thompson (Executors of).	Ellen Thompson (Ellen Thompson is also one of William's executrixes. She paid \$43,500 for 1/2 part of 213-215 Water Street).
Feb. 10, 1892 Liber 9; p. 183	Alexander A. Thompson	William A. Thompson (\$1 for 1/2 part of 213-215 Water Street).
March 21, 1901 Liber 63; p. 93	William A. Thompson Louise Schermerhorn Thompson (Indenture made August 29, 1896).	Ellen L. Thompson (\$6000 for 1/2 part of of 213-215 Water Street).
Jan. 17, 1931 Liber 3797; p. 94	Louise S. Thompson	Edith M. Cazenove Release of Dower
Nov. 25, 1947 Liber 4542; p. 234	Edith M. Maurice (Formerly Cazenove)	215 Water Street Realty Corporation
May 8, 1948 Liber 4568; p. 678	215 Water Street Realty Corporation	Herbert E. Simpson

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grantor</u>	<u>Grantee</u>
May 26, 1948 Liber 4571; p. 402	Herbert E. Simpson	Charles H. Demarest, Incorporated
Dec. 17, 1965 Liber 5354; p. 281	Charles H. Demarest Incorporated	Sally Nadel
Dec. 17, 1965 Liber 5354; p. 281	Sally Nadel	Delegate Realty Corporation
July 7, 1969 Liber 145; p. 941	Delegate Realty Corporation	Seaport Holdings, Incorporated (Lots 21, 22, now included in lot 5).
June 20, 1973 Liber 282; p. 705	Seaport Holdings, Incorporated	City of New York Lots 1,5,8.
June 20, 1973 Liber 283; pp. 63,81	City of New York	Chase Manhattan Bank (National Association) (Not lotted - All Rights Transfer).
June 27, 1973 Liber 282; p. 814	City of New York	South Street Seaport Museum: <u>Lease</u> Lots 1,5,8.

4. Original plans and construction: According to the new building application #482 submitted by Stephen D. Hatch on June 9, 1868, the new building is to be 40' x 69'-6" and 64' high, of five stories, with a flat roof. The application also stated "Five storey warehouses for tin and metals. Bottom made of driven piles three feet from centres, with rough timbers laid in concrete. Base stones three feet long worked in around the piles and timbers. Front to have iron lintel course supported by iron columns with antres back of same, in first storey. Marble columns and 8" ashlar with 12" brick backing, about the lintel course." In actuality, the upper stories of this Italianate building were built of limestone; the entire facade is contained within two vertical rows of quoin blocks.
5. Alterations and additions: The first alteration of 213-215 Water Street took place in 1902. In that year, the lessee, Berlin Aniline Company, installed a new elevator shaft, framed the old hatchways on all floors, and replaced one of the flues with a built-in flue lining. Plans for the \$1000 job were done by J. C. Hoes' Sons.

In 1917, architect Emery Roth, extended the stairway with bulkway to the roof and installed a new fire escape in the front of the building.

To remove a violation in 1958, Charles H. Demarest, Incorporated had architect Ferdinand E. Innocenti "remove wood platform projections beyond building line, provide new vestibule and steps at entrance, and enclose with proper partitions and doors all existing stairs," etc. (cost: \$7,000).

At this time the South Street Seaport Museum is rehabilitating 213-215 Water Street with the intentions of making the ground floor into an art gallery. They also plan to recreate the cast-iron ground floor facade, removed at some time over the years. The building is included in a general Altered Building Application #1734 filed by architects Beyer, Blinder & Belle in 1974.

- B. Historical Context: Before A. A. Thomson built the Italianate 213-215 Water Street in 1868 as a warehouse for a tin and metal company, two three-story buildings occupied lots 21 and 22. The land on which they stood was originally part of a 1750 water lot grant to Mary Cannon (B-455). Until Front Street was "regulated" in 1797, Water Street was the closest street to the water. The filled-in property and buildings eventually built upon it in the late 18th century were owned by some of the most prominent mercantile families in New York City - the Kortrights, the Cannons, the Lorillards, and the Costers. In 1799, Front and Water Streets were considered to be among the principal streets in New York City. Throughout the 19th century the area was occupied by wholesale grocers and commission merchants, iron dealers, warehousemen, and mechanics connected with the shipping business.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The building obviously reflects the influence of Griffith Thomas, an architect well established when Hatch started his career. One significant difference however, exists. All known buildings by Thomas carry a cornice line at every floor from extreme edge to extreme edge of the building. Thomas apparently thought of a multi-storied building as one floor set atop another. Hatch, in designing 213-215 Water Street contained the entire facade within two vertical lines of quoin blocks, which although modified at each floor, rise in two unbroken lines from building base to pediment. Hatch apparently felt a multi-storied building to be a vertical composition, several bays wide.

The building is four bays wide, five stories high. A bracket cornice runs across the top, surmounted by a pediment spanning the two center bays, with the date 1868 on a fan shaped plaque in the tympanum. The cornice is handled in correct classic architectural terms in that the raking cornice has a robust cyma recta cymatium, not found on the horizontal cornice; and although an ovolo element must be used just below the cymatium, which bends at an obtuse angle to extend horizontally as the top element of

the horizontal cornice, just below the ovolo, a split fillet is used correctly. The fascia area of both the raking cornice and the horizontal cornice have single brackets, of a cyma reversa profile. These brackets terminate, below what might be termed a taenia molding, in a demilune button. Several of these buttons are missing from the right hand half of the raking cornice and one each from the extreme outside edges of the building. The entire cornice unit is of stamped tin and appears to be in fairly good shape.

The second, third, fourth and fifth floors are composed of the same elements. Each bay originally had paired one-over-one double-hung window sash, separated by a mullion. In the 1917 alteration the two left hand bays of the third, fourth and fifth floors were filled in with concrete block with one fire escape door per floor. (The second floor windows of the two left hand bays now have a vertical muntin inserted in the original frame, making for a two-over-two configuration for each window).

Three quarter engaged columns, with Doric capitals and supporting flattened arch lintels, frame each window. At the outside edge of each outside bay the columns are replaced by half pilasters, square in section but identical in elevation to the columns. These columns have no pedestal, but rather the plinth which rests directly on the cornice of the floor below. Thus, in effect, the cornice of one floor serves as the window sill of the floor above. Framing this composition are quoin blocks, with short returns, beveled top and bottom. They individually measure 12" x 17". At each juncture with a cornice line, a faceted quoin block, slightly wider, but substantially less high, is used.

The ground floor is four bays wide. Each bay is framed by  $3/4$  engaged columns on pedestals, with Doric capitals. The two outermost columns are  $1/4$  columns. The columns support segmental arches on short impost blocks. Continuous moldings outline the arches and impost blocks. This entire composition is framed by two pilasters. Each pilaster has a pedestal and is composed of ten quoin blocks, 12" X 17", with short 3" deep returns, beveled top and bottom. The beveling extends  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " on both edges, leaving a 9" X 17" face. An eleventh quoin block in each pilaster is  $7\frac{3}{4}$ " X 17".

There are differences at ground level of these pilasters and capitals. The left hand pilaster goes to sidewalk level, while the right hand pilaster rests on a 12" granite over  $8\frac{1}{2}$ " brick base. The first two columns on the left rest on cast-iron pedestals 32" - 33" high, starting at sidewalk level. The next three columns rest on a 12" granite block over brick.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early views:

New York Historical Society: "Brooklyn Bridge (1894)" photographed by J. S. Johnston (#51230). The cornice and roof of 213-215 Water Street can be seen; raised white letters above the cornice spell "TIN".

Maritime Library, South Street Seaport Museum: "East River Bridge" Stereo View, ca. 1883. This photograph shows an excellent view of 213-215 Water Street with its quoin blocks, metal details and cornice that seem to be painted a dark color.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division: "Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges - East River," from Select New York, Albertype Illustrations, ca. 1900 - angle view of 213-215 Water Street's roof and facade.

NYC Department of Buildings, Municipal Building: Photograph of facade, 1917 filed with Alteration Application #2140.

B. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

New York City Department of Buildings, Municipal Building and Val Wenzel Files, South Street Seaport Museum.

New Building Application Docket #482 (1868); Alteration Application #151 (1902), plans available; #2140 (1917), plans available; #1603 (1957), plans available; #1734 (1974).

New York City Conveyances, Surrogate's Court.

Insurance Maps of the City of New York, 1857-1976, New York Historical Society.

New York City Tax records, Municipal Archives, 23 Park Row.

Waterlot Grants Map, Val Wenzel files, South Street Seaport Museum.

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New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission: Roberts, Lee and Steinke, Nancy, "Inventory of Structures in the Brooklyn Bridge S. E. Urban Renewal Area," New York, 1968, p.8.

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2. Secondary and published sources:

American Architect & Building News. "Obituary of Stephen D. Hatch," 1894, Vol. 45, p. 69.

Brault, Elle. Les Architects Par Leurs Oeuvres. Paris: 1894, Vol. III, p. 444-445.

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Scoville, Joseph A. alias Barrett, Walter. The Old Merchants of New York. New York: Carleton, Pub., 1862, Vol. I & IV.

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Withey, Henry F. and Withey, Elsa Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co. 1956.

Prepared by: Lori Zabar  
HABS Project Historian  
Summer 1976

Henry F. Ludder  
Architectural Report  
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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The South Street Seaport project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with the co-operation of the South Street Seaport Museum, Inc. Recording was carried out during the summer of 1976 by Frederick W. Wiedenmann (HABS Washington, D.C. office) project supervisor; Lori Zabar (Columbia University), project historian; Robert Lee Wiltse (Louisiana State University), architect; and student architects-Barry Lee Gill (North Dakota State University), Joe E. Price (Texas Tech University), and John R. Temmink (University of Virginia). Susan McCown, a HABS historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. Walter Smalling, Jr. of the National Park Service took the photographs of the South Street Seaport structures. The architectural report was obtained from an outside source.